

## COVID-19: Masking in Schools

### | Background

Central District Health (CDH) recognizes the value of in-person learning and the challenge of balancing the risks of COVID-19 and educational, social, and emotional supports. While COVID-19 is circulating in the United States, measures need to be taken in order to ensure that schools operate in a way that minimizes risk to students, staff, and the community.

In keeping with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) recommendations](#), CDH recommends universal indoor masking\* for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. *If you are not fully vaccinated and aged two (2) or older, you [should wear a mask](#) in all indoor public places.* When you wear a mask, you protect others as well as yourself.

*\*Masks fit correctly and completely cover the nose and mouth without gapping. The CDC offers the following guidance on [How to Wear Masks](#).*

### | Masking is an Effective Way to Reduce Transmission

The CDC reports that COVID-19 spreads primarily from person to person through respiratory droplets that travel into the air when individuals cough, sneeze, talk, or shout. Once these droplets are expelled into the air, they can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or they may breathe these droplets in.

Studies show that masks reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. Students and staff should wear a mask, even if they do not feel sick. Several studies have found that people with COVID-19 who never develop symptoms and those who are not yet showing symptoms can still spread the virus to others.

In indoor congregate settings of individuals who do not reside together, like schools, it is particularly important that all individuals practice universal masking to protect themselves and those around them.

- Sourced from CDC - [Guidance for Wearing Masks](#)

## | Masking and Quarantine Procedures

CDC has updated their close contact definition to include an exception for students in K-12 classroom settings. CDC's exception states that yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) students in the K-12 indoor classroom setting\* who were within three to six (3-6) feet of an infected student *do not need to quarantine\*\* when:*

- Both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks;  
**and**
- Other K-12 school prevention strategies were in place in the K-12 school setting.

*\*The K-12 indoor classroom setting is the only place this exception applies. This exception **CANNOT** be applied for exposure in other spaces in the school, extracurricular activities, or the community.*

*\*\*These students do not need to quarantine from school or extracurricular activities, but should quarantine from the community for 7-14 days. If using the 7 day option, the student must receive a negative test result taken at day 5 or later.*

This exception cannot be used if yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) students were not correctly wearing masks during the exposure.

This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting. Any teacher, staff, or other adult who is yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) should maintain six (6) feet of distance or more between themselves and others not from their household. If a teacher, staff member, or other adult is yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) and is within six (6) feet of an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 they would need to quarantine according to their school's policy.

## | Vaccines

In the event of an exposure, schools should have a protocol in place to verify vaccination status. Those who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine, but should monitor for symptoms.

*If person is **fully vaccinated** and exposed:*

- You should get tested at least 3 days after your exposure, even if you don't have symptoms.
  - The date of exposure is considered day 0.
  - Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative.
- Isolate for 10 days if your test result is positive.

If person is **yet to be vaccinated** (unvaccinated) and exposed:

- Quarantine for 7 to 14 days.
  - If using the 7-day option, the individual must receive a negative test taken day 5 or later. If the 7 or 10-day quarantine options are used, continue wearing a mask for 14 days after the exposure.
  - The date of exposure is considered day 0.
- Isolate for 10 days if your test is positive.

## **| Masking and Physical Distancing Procedures**

CDC recommends schools maintain at least three (3) feet of physical distance between students within classrooms combined with indoor universal mask wearing. These two strategies will help reduce risk of virus transmission within the classroom. If possible, six (6) feet of distance is still recommended between individuals who are not fully vaccinated.

CDC recommends in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year and acknowledges that three (3) feet of distance will not always be maintained. When unable to maintain the three (3) feet of distance, it is recommended that multiple other mitigation strategies are utilized to reduce risk of transmission. These other mitigation strategies include indoor masking, screening tests, cohorting, improved ventilation, handwashing, proper respiratory etiquette, sick individuals staying home, and regular cleaning. It is best to use multiple mitigation strategies at once for the most protection.

## **Resources for Use + More Information:**

[When to Quarantine](#) | CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.htm>